

# **Style Guide For Electronic Case Filing**



**U.S. Bankruptcy Court  
Northern District of Texas**

**January 2003**

This guide contains the preferred style practices for all users of the CM/ECF application in the Northern District of Texas. The intention of the guide is to make everyone’s task easier, whether they are entering data or inquiring into the CM/ECF database. The application of a common set of styles when creating docket entries results in information being captured and displayed in more uniform and predictable ways, thus reducing confusion and errors. In addition, style consistency is the key to efficient searches in CM/ECF, since successful queries require very exact matches on search data including punctuation, abbreviations and upper or lower case.

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# Adding Parties

***When Adding New Parties to the CM/ECF Database, the Names Should Conform with Standard Punctuation and Spacing Conventions Listed in the Style Conventions for Names section of this Guide.***

Much of case opening in CM/ECF consists of adding the names of debtors, joint debtors, plaintiffs and defendants to cases. As cases progress, creditors and other parties are added. Access to this information is vital to the court, the bar and the general public.

## Searching For Parties

***First, search the CM/ECF database for the party you want to add to a case.***

Before adding any party to a case, search for that party using appropriate “search strategies”. If the system finds the correct name, select it to help eliminate different versions of the same party name.

Even something as simple as "United States" can cause ambiguity if it is entered in different forms. Following this style guide can help avoid “United States” being in the database also as “UNITED STATES”, “U.S.”, “US”, “USA”, “U.S.A.”, or “U.S. of A.”, for instance.

### ***Search Strategies***

CM/ECF searches are not key word searches but require exact text matches.

- Use appropriate upper and lowercase characters since the search is case sensitive.
- When searching for debtors, the more search clues you provide, the more likely you are to find the exact party you are searching for. For example, if you search for a last name of Grant, CM/ECF may return a list of a hundred parties with that last name. However, CM/ECF will return a single party, or indicate there is no match for that criteria, if you search for a last name of Grant with a Social Security number of 333-22-1111.

### ***Guidelines for Names & Searches***

- When searching for creditors, it may be necessary to conduct multiple searches. First, search for the entire creditor name (e.g., World Communications). If that is not successful, you can search for part of the creditor's name (e.g., World Comm or just World). If there are articles in the title such as "A" or "The," you may or may not need to include the article in the search. For example, a search request for The Timely Times may not produce a result. But a search request for Timely Times will be successful.

- When searching for a Party DO NOT use an asterisk (\*) in the search criteria as follows:

Villa\*

Use of the asterisk slows down the entire system. When searching for Villareal, the name will be found without using the asterisk as follows:

Villa

Bottom line: **DO NOT USE ASTERISK IN SEARCH CRITERIA.**

- An unsuccessful search for A. & A. Metals might be successful if you search without punctuation (i.e., A & A Metals).

NOTE: If the party is not found, ensure the party is involved in a Northern District of Texas bankruptcy case. Logging into the Northern District of Texas' CM/ECF application only provides case information regarding cases filed in this District. Also, if the case is several years old, it has probably been archived.

## **Adding Debtors**

***Add debtors to cases using names and addresses exactly as they appear on the petition or complaint.***

In most cases, you will NOT find debtors or joint debtors when you search the CM/ECF database. You will have to add them to the database and the case as a new party.

***If a debtor has a title, add the title in the "party text" box.***

Any title that you add as party text will show up on the face of the docket report following the name and separated by a comma.

### Title Tips

1. The name of the debtor without the title will appear in docket text.
2. Titles will not appear on notices.
3. Titles will appear on the face of the docket report in upper and lower case following the debtor name as shown below:

Jose Garza, Administrator of the Estate of Sylvia Garza

ABC Rental, a Texas Corporation

Catherine V. Ruiz, Official Administrator of Lottery Winnings

***Make an entry in the SSN box or the Tax ID box even if the social security number for an individual debtor or tax identification number for a business debtor is unknown.***

SSN: 000-00-0000

Tax ID: 00-0000000

### Adding Plaintiffs and Defendants (Adversary Proceedings/Complaints)

***Add plaintiffs and defendants to cases using names exactly as they appear on the complaint.***

When you search for plaintiffs and defendants, you will probably find them in the database.

***Do NOT add any addresses for plaintiffs or defendants.***

***Do NOT add a title for plaintiffs or defendants.***

***Make sure to select the plaintiff or defendant party role.***

If you find a plaintiff or defendant in CM/ECF with an address, delete the address fields before accepting the Party information screen.

## Adding Creditors

***Add creditors to cases using names already in the CM/ECF database if at all possible.***

When you search for a creditor, you will probably find the party in the CM/ECF database.

Creditors (such as Ford Motor Credit) are added to many different cases. Ideally, there should be only one Ford Motor Credit party in the CM/ECF database. This greatly simplifies searching when adding parties and querying cases.

For instance, it is better to add Ford Motor Credit to all cases even if that is not the exact name used on a document being docketed. The idea is to avoid adding name variations for a single creditor. For example

```
(      Ford Motor Credit
;
;      Ford Motor Credit Company
;      Ford Motor Credit Co.
;      Ford Motor Credit Corporation
;      Ford Motor Credit Company, Inc.
;      Ford Motor Company
;      Ford Motor Credit Corp.
;      Ford Motors Credit Company
;      Ford Motor Credit Company ("FMCC")
```

The proliferation of different names for the same creditor makes searching frustrating and time consuming.

***Do NOT add mailing addresses for creditors.***

If you find a creditor in CM/ECF with an address, delete the address fields before accepting the Party Information screen.

***Do NOT add a title for creditors.***

***Make sure to select the creditor party role.***

# Style Conventions for Names

(These style conventions apply to all names entered in the CM/ECF application.)

***Use upper and lower case for all names and capitalize the first letter in a proper noun.***

Wallace D. Smith  
United Services Fidelity and Guaranty

***Use punctuation and single spacing between all names and following initials and periods.***

J. J. Jones  
Smith, Inc.  
C. W. Bradford, Ltd.

***When typing names that have upper and lower case letters or hyphens, do not insert spaces.***

Patricia DeLaGarza  
Patrick MacDougal  
Kathleen O'Brien  
Mary Smith-Baker

***If an individual does not have a middle name, leave that field blank.***

Do not enter "NMI" (no middle initial).

***If a party has multiple names such as Robert Kramer Johns Martin, add the extra names in the Middle Name box.***

Last name:	Martin
Middle name:	Kramer Johns
First name:	Robert

***Business names should be entered entirely in the Last Name box.***

Do not use the First Name or Middle Name box when entering business names.

***Do not use the ampersand sign (&) for "and" unless it is part of a company name on the petition or pleading.***

B. & D. Company  
Cameron & Associates  
J & J Trucking

***Avoid abbreviations unless it is part of a company name on the petition or pleading.***

(	Ford Motor Company	;	Ford Motor Co.
(	First Federal Association	;	1 <sup>st</sup> Federal Assoc.

***Enter U.S. and U.S.A. without any spaces.***

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
U.S. Trustee  
U.S. Attorney  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission



# Style Conventions for Addresses

*These style conventions apply to all debtor addresses and creditor matrix addresses entered in the CM/ECF application.*

***Abbreviate post office addresses without a space between the P and O.***

P.O. Box 1359  
P.O. Drawer 34321

***Use digits for numbers in addresses.***

3224 East 26<sup>th</sup> Street  
425 6th Street  
1 Valley Plaza

***When there is a street address as well as a post office box address for a debtor, add only the post office address.***

John J. Johnson  
P. O. Box 1477  
4218 Elmwood Lane ***(Elimate this line)***  
Bentonville, AR 40453

***When needed, use the second and/or third line of the address for building name, suite number, floor, firm name, or attention***

Arthur Andersen and Associates  
Attention: Terri Brooks  
John Hancock Building, Suite 2600  
8723 Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60604

***The city, state and zip must be the only information on the last address line.***

***Use the full ten digit zip code if at all possible.***

## ***Foreign Addresses***

***Foreign addresses must have the full name of the post office and country of destination printed in capital letters.***

***The country name or APO destination must be the only information on the bottom***

***line of the address.***

Alfonso Diaz  
Rio de Danubec y Rio Florido  
CD. JUAREZ, CHIHUAHUA  
MEXICO #1050

Sgt. John Smith  
C Company 237 Armor  
Unit #21103, Box 512  
APO AE 09014

***If the address contains an apartment number or suite number, you may use the # sign in place of the word number or suite.***

Barbara Bixby  
322 West Shady Lane, # 334  
Dallas, TX 75242

***Use c/o to indicate "In Care Of".***

John Joseph, Jr.  
c/o John Joseph, Sr.  
6612 East 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Ft. Worth, TX 76102

***The preferred format for telephone numbers is (214) 555-3851.***

# Creditor Matrix Specifications

*All creditor matrix files must be provided to the court as an ASCII DOS text file.*

*Margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be at least one (1) inch.*

*The case number must be provided in the top left corner in the format YY-NNNNN.*

*Each creditor must be separated by at least one blank line.*

*Do not include page numbers, headers, footers, etc.*

*All entries should conform to the style specifications in the Style Guide.*

*The name and address of each creditor must be five (5) lines or less.*

*Each line may contain no more than 40 characters including spaces.*

*Names and addresses should be left justified (flush against the left margin, no leading spaces.)*

*Account numbers or “attention” lines should be placed on the second line of the name / address.*

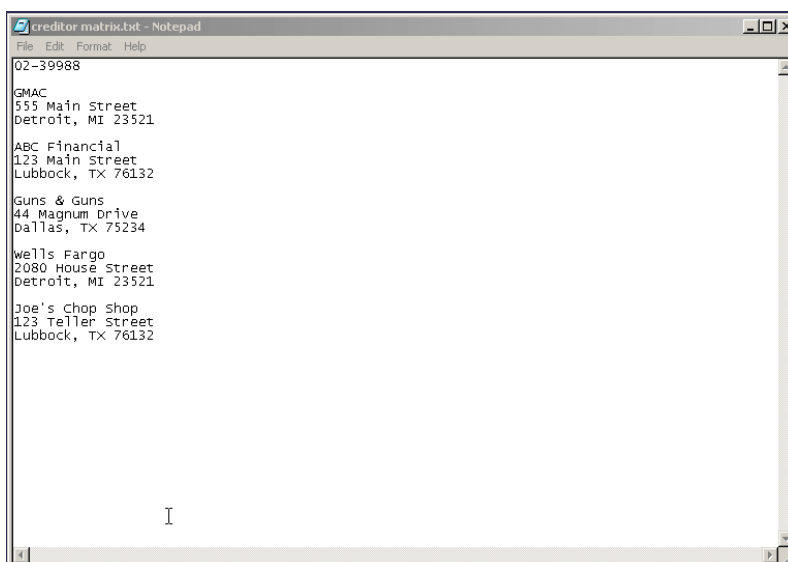
*City, state and ZIP code must be on the last line.*

*There must be a comma placed immediately after the city name.*

*All states must be two-letter abbreviations.*

*Nine digit ZIP codes must be typed with a hyphen separating the two groups of digits.*

*An example a correctly formatted creditor matrix is provided in the figure below.*



# Abbreviations

## States & Territories

AL	Alabama	MT	Montana
AK	Alaska	NE	Nebraska
AZ	Arizona	NV	Nevada
AR	Arkansas	NH	New Hampshire
AS	American Samoa	NJ	New Jersey
CA	California	NM	New Mexico
CO	Colorado	NY	New York
CT	Connecticut	NC	North Carolina
DE	Delaware	ND	North Dakota
DC	District of Columbia	CM	N. Mariana Isl.
FL	Florida	OH	Ohio
GA	Georgia	OK	Oklahoma
GU	Guam	OR	Oregon
HI	Hawaii	TT	Palau
ID	Idaho	PA	Pennsylvania
IL	Illinois	PR	Puerto Rico
IN	Indiana	RI	Rhode Island
IA	Iowa	SC	South Carolina
KS	Kansas	SD	South Dakota
KY	Kentucky	TN	Tennessee
LA	Louisiana	TX	Texas
ME	Maine	UT	Utah
TT	Marshall Island	VT	Vermont
MD	Maryland	VA	Virginia
MA	Massachusetts	VI	Virgin Islands
MX	Mexico	WA	Washington
MI	Michigan	WV	West Virginia
TT	Micronesia	WI	Wisconsin
MS	Mississippi	WY	Wyoming
MO	Missouri		

## Geographic Directions

North = N.	Northeast = N.E.
South = S.	Southwest = S.W.
East = E.	Southeast = S.E.
West = W.	Northwest = N.W.

## Street Designators

***In general it is best to type out the entire name of the street designator.***

If there is a necessity to abbreviate, use the following:

Avenue	Ave.
Boulevard	Blvd.
Highway	Hwy.
Interstate Highway	I.H.
Lane	Ln.
Street	St.
Road	Rd.

# Style Conventions for Docket Text

The CM/ECF application has been designed to produce a consistent form of docket text. Most of the time you will not need to change docket text in any way when you are creating docket entries. This section provides you with some preferred practices to enhance docket text to add further meaning or clarification to the court record.

## Negative Notice Language

***Users will not need to add objection language to motions filed in CM/ECF. The system automatically sets a deadline for objections depending on the motion filed. The system allows you to change the objection date if you desire. The court has identified those motions which may be filed with negative language. The final docket text will display if an objection is due, and the deadline for objections. For these motions, a hearing will only be held if an objection is filed.***

## Contested Matter Text

***Docket text should reflect the style of a contested matter as much as practically possible.***

Sometimes the CM/ECF event you use to docket a contested matter will display a text box for you to further describe the pleading you are filing.

There is more than enough room in the displayed text boxes to add any text you feel is necessary.

You are able to review whatever docket text you add before you accept the final docket entry. You can go back (click the browser **[Back]** button) to add or correct text.

## Descriptions of Linked Documents

***If a docket entry has been linked to another docket entry, the document “linked to” should be adequately described in docket text.***

When you docket an entry which references (“links to”) another docket entry, the docket text automatically displays the description of the document that has been referenced.

## Multiple-Part Contested Matter Text

***Docket text for contested matters with more than one cause of action should reflect the style of each cause of action as much as practically possible.***

Depending on the CM/ECF events you use to docket a multi-part contested matter, CM/ECF will display one or more text boxes for you to further describe the pleading you are filing.

# PDF File Specifications

All files associated with a docket entry in CM/ECF should be in Portable Document Format (PDF). Any secondary attachments, such as exhibits, should also be submitted to the system as a PDF according to the following guidelines. The only file submitted in a different format than PDF is the Creditor Matrix. The Creditor Matrix should be submitted in ASCII DOS text format (.txt).

The general rule regarding PDF files: All pleadings submitted to the CM/ECF system as a PDF should be styled and formatted just as if you were going to print the document and file it with the Court in paper form. Provided below are some general guidelines to follow when creating documents to be submitted in CM/ECF.

1. Margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be at least one (1) inch.
2. Page size should be 8.5" x 11". Use standard paper stock.
3. Use a font style that is legible. The preferred font style is Times New Roman.
4. The font color of the text should be black. Avoid using colored fonts such as red, yellow, green, or blue. No shading. Again, you want the text to be legible.
5. Font size should be no smaller than 10, and no larger than 12.
6. Do not include .jpg, .tif, .bmp, or .gif images in your PDF file.
7. All pages should be numbered. The preferred format is *1 of 3*, *2 of 3*, etc.
8. **DO NOT USE BAR CODES** on any pages.
9. When filing a new case, the Petition, Schedules, Summary of Schedules (if filed simultaneously), Statement of Financial Affairs, and Verification of Mailing Matrix should be included in a "primary" PDF document in that order. These should not be docketed separately. The actual Creditor Matrix, Plan, and Authorization for Pre-confirmation Disbursement should be docketed separately.
10. The file size of the PDF should be no larger than 2 MB (approximately 30 pages). Choose the lowest possible resolution (200 dpi) when creating the PDF to reduce submitting unnecessarily large PDF files to the CM/ECF system.
11. Print the Word or WordPerfect file to PDF rather than using the functionality provided in the word processor.

# Paper Document Specifications

*The following guidelines have been provided in the event your pleading must be filed in paper form.*

1. Margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be at least one (1) inch.
2. Paper should be white, size 8 ½" x 11". Use standard paper stock.
3. Use a font that is legible. The preferred font style is Times New Roman.
4. The font color of the text should be black. Avoid using colored fonts such as red, yellow, green, or blue. No shading. Again, you want the text to be legible.
5. Font size should be no smaller than 10 and no larger than 12.
6. All pages should be numbered. The preferred page numbering format is 1 of 10, 2 of 10, 3 of 10, etc.
7. **DO NOT USE BAR CODES** on any pages.
8. **DO NOT STAPLE** the documents. Documents may be bound with a paper clip, rubber band, or binder clip.
9. **DO NOT HOLE PUNCH** the documents.
10. Submit original documents plus two copies if you wish to receive a returned, file stamped copy. If you want a file-stamped copy returned to you, submit the original document plus 2 copies and a self-addressed stamped envelope.
11. Exhibits and attachments available in electronic format should be submitted in electronic summaries or excerpts. The clerk's office will scan only the first 5 pages of any exhibit or attachment filed in paper format. The complete exhibit or attachment must be made available to opposing counsel and the court upon request, and be available in the courtroom at any hearing pertaining to the matter.



## **Document Specifications for Orders**

1. Margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be at least one (1) inch.
2. Use a font that is legible. The preferred font style is Times New Roman.
3. The font color of the text should be black. Avoid using colored fonts such as red, yellow, green, or blue. Again, you want the text to be legible.
4. Font size should be no smaller than 10 and no larger than 12.
5. All pages should be numbered. The preferred page numbering format is 1 of 10, 2 of 10, 3 of 10, etc.
6. If you are submitting an order electronically through the Proposed Order Upload in CM/ECF, you should submit the document in WordPerfect, or Word format.
7. The last page of orders submitted electronically should also contain four inches of space at the end of the document. If four inches of space is not provided, the judges signature will not be applied correctly to your document.